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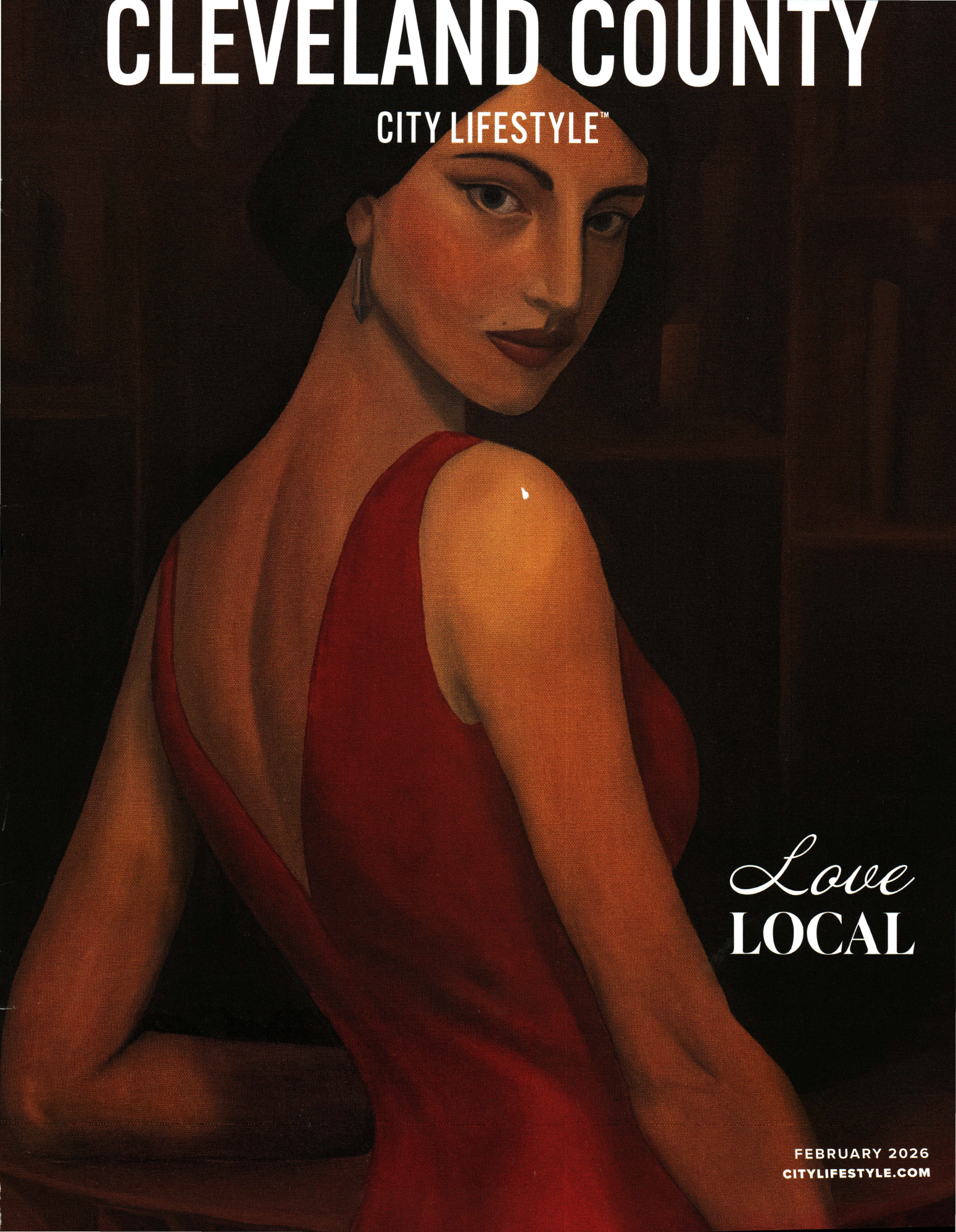

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GRACE JONES

Recent sports or academic highlight?
I'm a member of the National Honor Society and play varsity for Norman North on the girls' basketball, cross country, and track and field teams.

Personal highlights?
I am the daughter of Tiffany Courange and Ty Jones. I've played basketball for six years now, and last year I joined the cross country and track teams. My team and I even got to attend the state cross country meet! Outside of sports, I love spending time with family and friends, watching movies, and just being outdoors.

How do you maintain balance?
I balance life, school, and sports with the help of my family—they have always pushed me to do my best. I also make sure I stay focused on whatever I'm doing at the moment, whether that's in the classroom or out at practice.

Plans for the future?
I'm currently taking classes at OCCC and plan to further my education to someday work in the medical field. I'm still exploring my options, but I'm excited for what's next.

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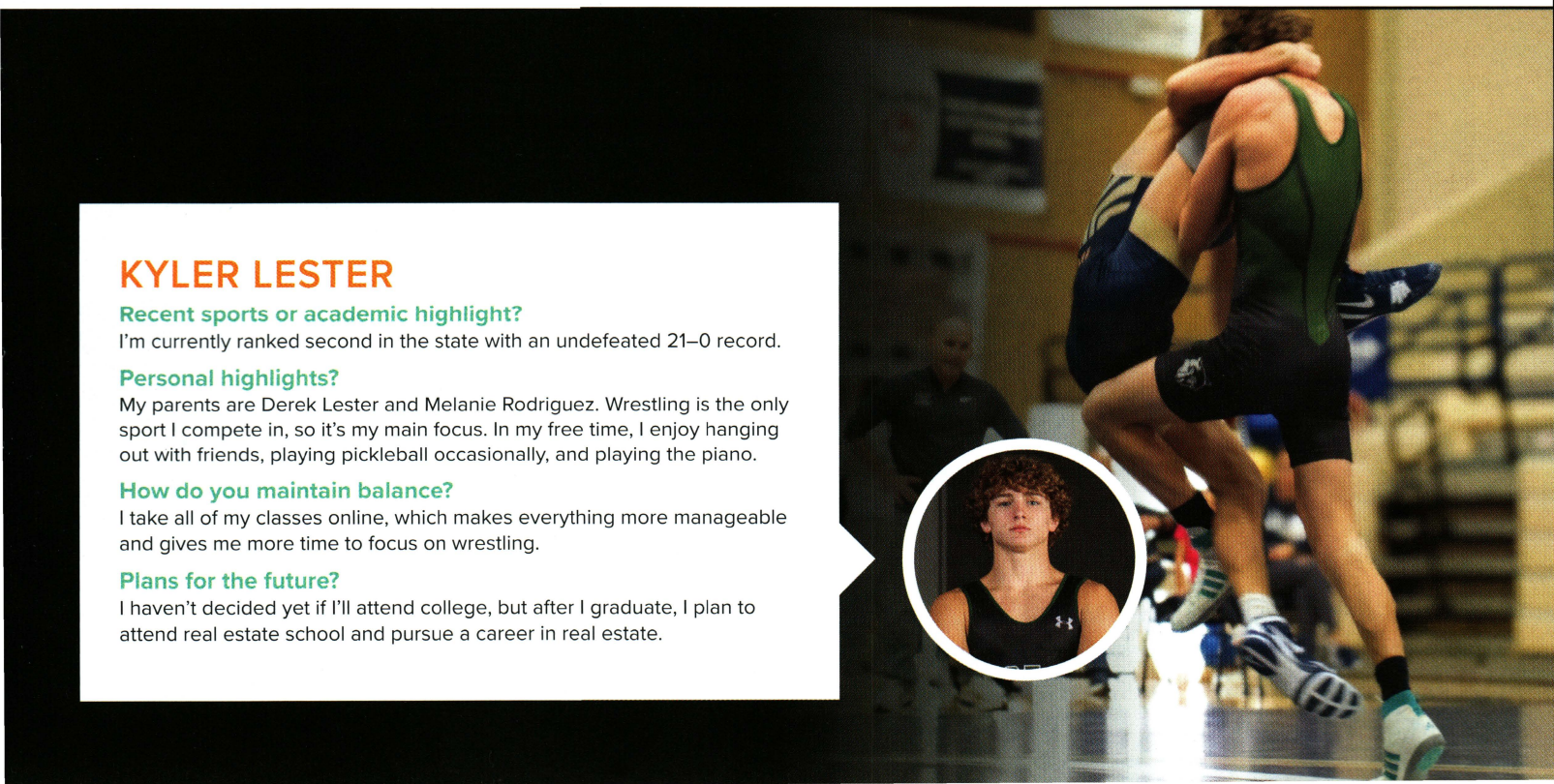

KYLER LESTER

Recent sports or academic highlight?
I'm currently ranked second in the state with an undefeated 21–0 record.

Personal highlights?
My parents are Derek Lester and Melanie Rodriguez. Wrestling is the only sport I compete in, so it's my main focus. In my free time, I enjoy hanging out with friends, playing pickleball occasionally, and playing the piano.

How do you maintain balance?
I take all of my classes online, which makes everything more manageable and gives me more time to focus on wrestling.

Plans for the future?
I haven't decided yet if I'll attend college, but after I graduate, I plan to attend real estate school and pursue a career in real estate.

February - Love Local Issue

As February rolls around, I always find myself in a familiar tug-of-war. On one hand, I want to resist the pull of another commercialized holiday, yet on the other, I can't help but savor the sweet moments it brings—an excuse to celebrate love in all its forms.

Do we opt for a Valentine's Day date out or settle in for a cozy night at home? A handwritten card or a heartfelt kind word? For me, it's usually a mix of both. Each of us will find our own ways to mark the occasion, shaped by our unique preferences and personalities. But what unites us all is the opportunity to remind those around us just how much they mean to us.

This month's issue is dedicated to helping you do just that—celebrating and highlighting the best of what's to love in our local community.

As we navigate the lingering chill of winter and the promise of spring's arrival, let's take a moment to come together with the people who matter most. Whether they're in your home, down the street, or across the community, February is a wonderful time to connect and share love.

"Love local" isn't just about supporting the businesses in your area—it's about cherishing what's near to you in every sense. So, why not grab a cup of coffee and enjoy a game night by the fire with your family? Or pick up a bottle of wine and some cheese for a relaxed movie night in.

At the heart of everything we do is the belief that together, we're stronger. Every month, the stories shared within these pages prove that again and again.

Thank you for allowing us to be part of the life you're building. Our greatest hope is that this issue helps you love it just a little more than before.

Here's to a February filled with love—both local and beyond!

JIMMY DARDEN, PUBLISHER
@CITYLIFESTYLE_CLEVELANDCOUNTY

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CLEVELAND COUNTY
CITY LIFESTYLE™

February 2026

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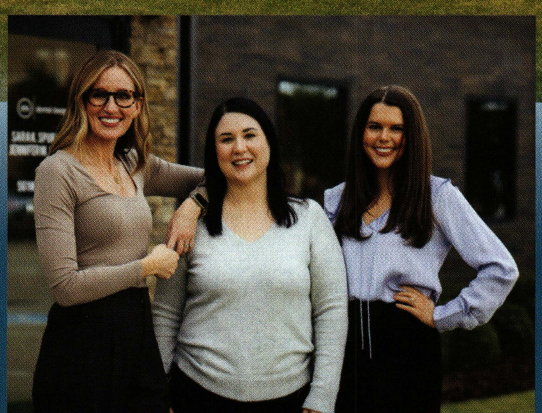

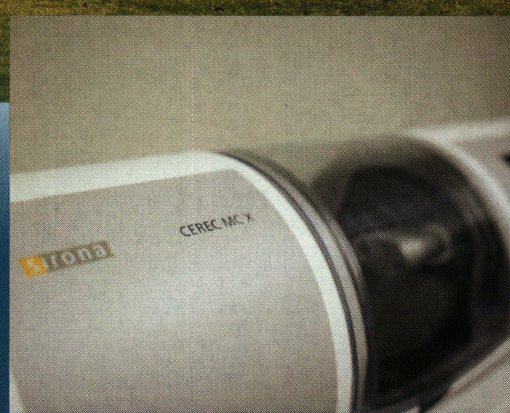

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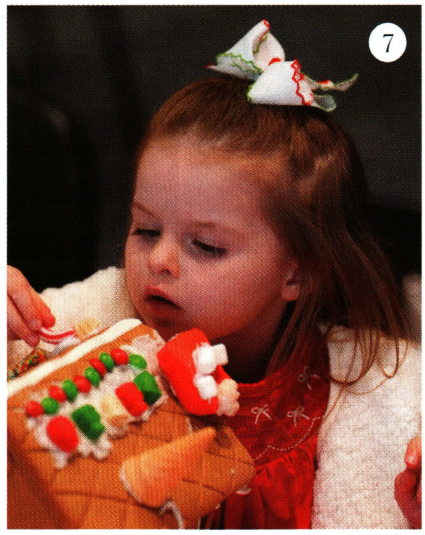

1-7: The Norman Public School Foundation's Gingerbread Jingle event was a sweet success!

Photography by Norman Public School Foundation

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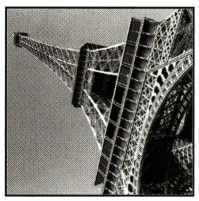

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business *monthly*

A ROUNDUP OF NEWS FROM LOCAL BUSINESSES

Growing Like a Read

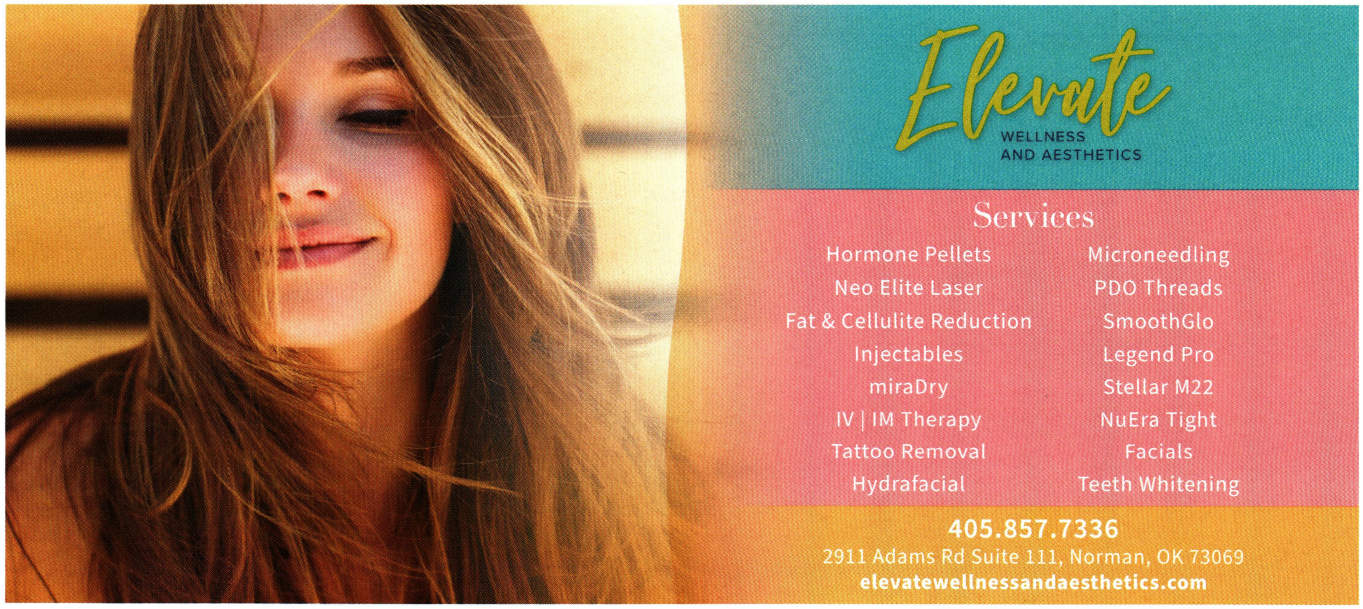
Growing Like a Read (GLAR) is Pioneer Library System's early literacy program for children from birth to age five, supporting six essential pre-reading skills. Early literacy begins in the first three years through reading, singing, talking, and playing. Built into every PLS Story Time, the program equips families with books, songs, and resources—encouraging 20 minutes a day to build strong readers for life. Learn more at pioneerlibrarysystem.org!

Scan to read more

Messages of Hope Determination and Unity

A Black History Month Celebration: Broadway performer, Elvie Ellis, joins the Norman Philharmonic and 200-voice Unity Choir for this collaboration with Norman Public Schools Fine Arts and Langston University. The program also includes an Oklahoma Black Art exhibit, dance ensembles, and high school orchestra students performing side by side with the Norman PHIL. Tickets available online at **normanphil.com** or at the door. **Saturday, Feb. 7, 4:00 pm, Benson Auditorium, 3801 Journey Parkway, Norman.**

Scan to read more



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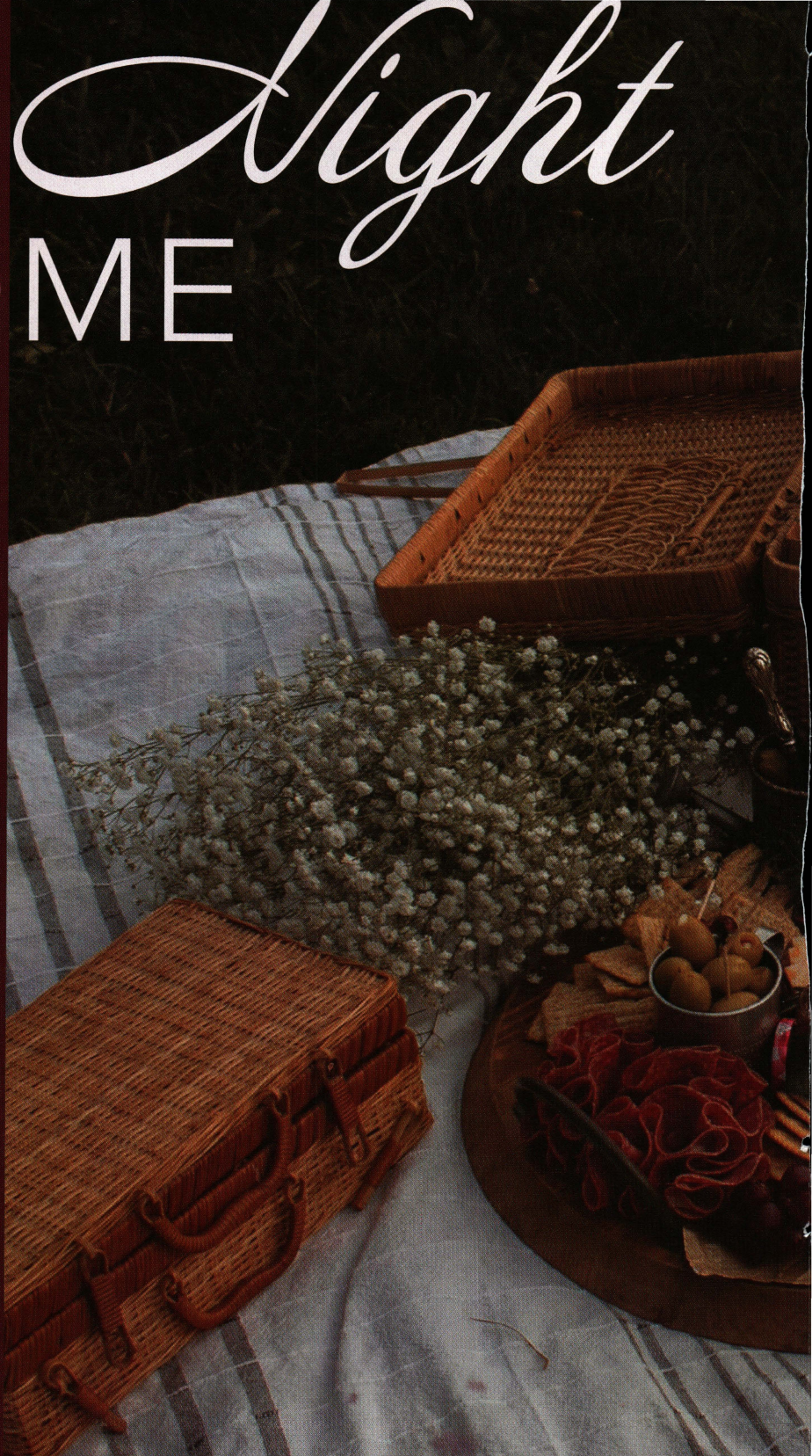
Date Night AT HOME

THREE CREATIVE IDEAS TO CELEBRATE LOVE

ARTICLE BY BAILEY HALL

Not every date night needs to involve reservations or an elaborate itinerary. With a little creativity, you can create magical moments right at home. Whether you're celebrating Valentine's Day or just want to reconnect, here are three ideas for unforgettable at-home date nights.



ROMANTIC PICNIC UNDER THE STARS

Transform your backyard or balcony into a dreamy picnic spot! Spread out a cozy blanket, add a few fluffy pillows, and hang string lights or fairy lights for ambiance. A small fire pit or lanterns can also add a romantic glow.

Pack a picnic basket with finger foods and a bottle of wine or sparkling water. Don't forget a decadent dessert like chocolate-dipped strawberries.

Lay back and stargaze, identifying constellations or making wishes on shooting stars. To make it extra romantic, bring a bluetooth speaker and play soft music.

CONTINUED >

PAINT AND CREATE TOGETHER

Unleash your inner artists with one of these three fun and interactive dates. Grab some inexpensive canvases, brushes, and acrylic paints from the craft store. Don't forget aprons or old clothes to protect against spills!

- Paint each other's portraits for a mix of laughter and creativity.
- Work on a collaborative painting - each person adds their own touch to a single canvas.
- Try a themed painting challenge, like recreating your favorite memory together.

Pair this date with a cheese platter and wine and don't worry about being "good' at painting - it's all about enjoying the process together.

BREAKFAST IN BED

Start the day with love by turning breakfast into an indulgent experience. Prepare a tray with a DIY breakfast charcuterie board. Include mini pancakes, waffles, fresh fruit, yogurt, granola, bacon, and pastries. Add small bowls of toppings like syrup, Nutella, or whipped cream.

Mix up mimosas or serve coffee with flavored syrups and whipped cream for a café vibe. Then, snuggle up in bed and watch a favorite movie or TV series.

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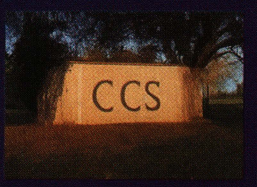

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Local Visionaries: *Art, Music, Theater*

THREE OKLAHOMA ARTISTS SHARE THEIR JOURNEYS OF RENEWAL AND INSPIRATION.

This February, we celebrate the journeys and rituals of three local visionaries—a master violist, a theater director, and a narrative painter—whose work brings vibrant renewal to our community.

Artist Profile - Royce McLarry

EVERY ARTIST HAS A UNIQUE 'ORIGIN STORY' WITH OUR COMMUNITY. HOW HAS LIVING OR WORKING IN THE OKC AREA SHAPED YOUR CREATIVE VOICE, AND IS THERE A SPECIFIC LOCAL SPOT THAT NEVER FAILS TO INSPIRE YOU?

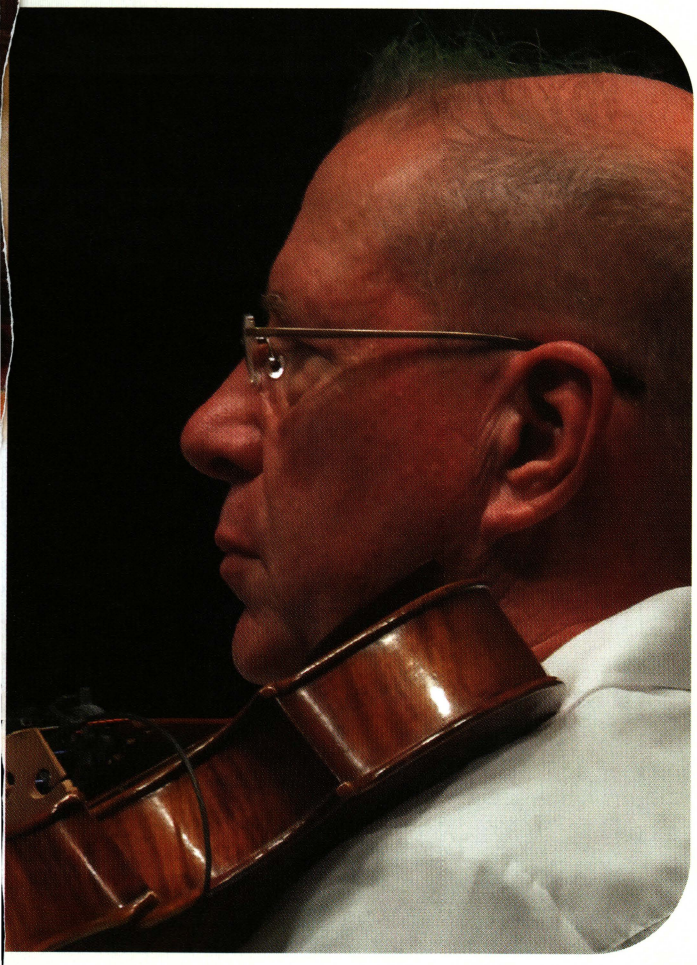
My parents, my sister and I moved to Norman from Emporia, KS in the summer of 1972. I attended Jackson Elementary School for grades 4-5 and Whittier Middle School for grades 6-8. The following year we moved to Oklahoma City where I attended Northwest Classen High School. I graduated from Oklahoma City University with a Bachelor of Music Degree in 1987. My father, Lacy McLarry, was Concertmaster of the Oklahoma Symphony during the 1970s and through the mid 1980s. My mother is a singer, composer and retired choir director. My sister is also a violinist.

I played in the Oklahoma Youth Orchestra and attended Oklahoma Summer Arts Institute as a high school student. I remember my earlier days in Norman fondly. I enjoyed playing in the Whittier Middle School Orchestra with my friends. Several of those musicians I continue to play with to this day.

WHETHER YOU ARE TUNING AN INSTRUMENT, PREPPING A CANVAS, OR REHEARSING A SCENE, WHAT DOES THE FIRST HOUR OF YOUR CREATIVE PROCESS

ARTICLE AND PHOTOGRAPHY PROVIDED BY ARTIST

Norman Philharmonic Music & Artistic Director, Richard Zielinski, remarks, ***"It has been a privilege for the past 15 years to work with Royce, who is such a gifted musician and kind person. He is always prepared at the first rehearsal with a positive attitude and smile."***



LOOK LIKE? DO YOU HAVE ANY 'MUST-HAVE' RITUALS TO GET INTO THE ZONE

The first hour of preparation for an upcoming performance includes working the more difficult passages. Basically, trying to be as well prepared for the first rehearsal of any upcoming performances as possible.

FEBRUARY OFTEN SITS AT THE CROSSROADS OF WINTER'S QUIET AND THE FIRST HINTS OF SPRING. HOW DOES THIS TIME OF YEAR—OR THE THEMES OF REFLECTION AND RENEWAL—SHOW UP IN YOUR CURRENT WORK?

February has always been a special month for me. Since it's my birth month it is naturally a month of reflection and renewal.

ART IS OFTEN A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE CREATOR AND THE AUDIENCE. WHAT IS ONE THING YOU HOPE A LOCAL NEIGHBOR FEELS OR THINKS ABOUT AFTER EXPERIENCING YOUR WORK FOR THE FIRST TIME?

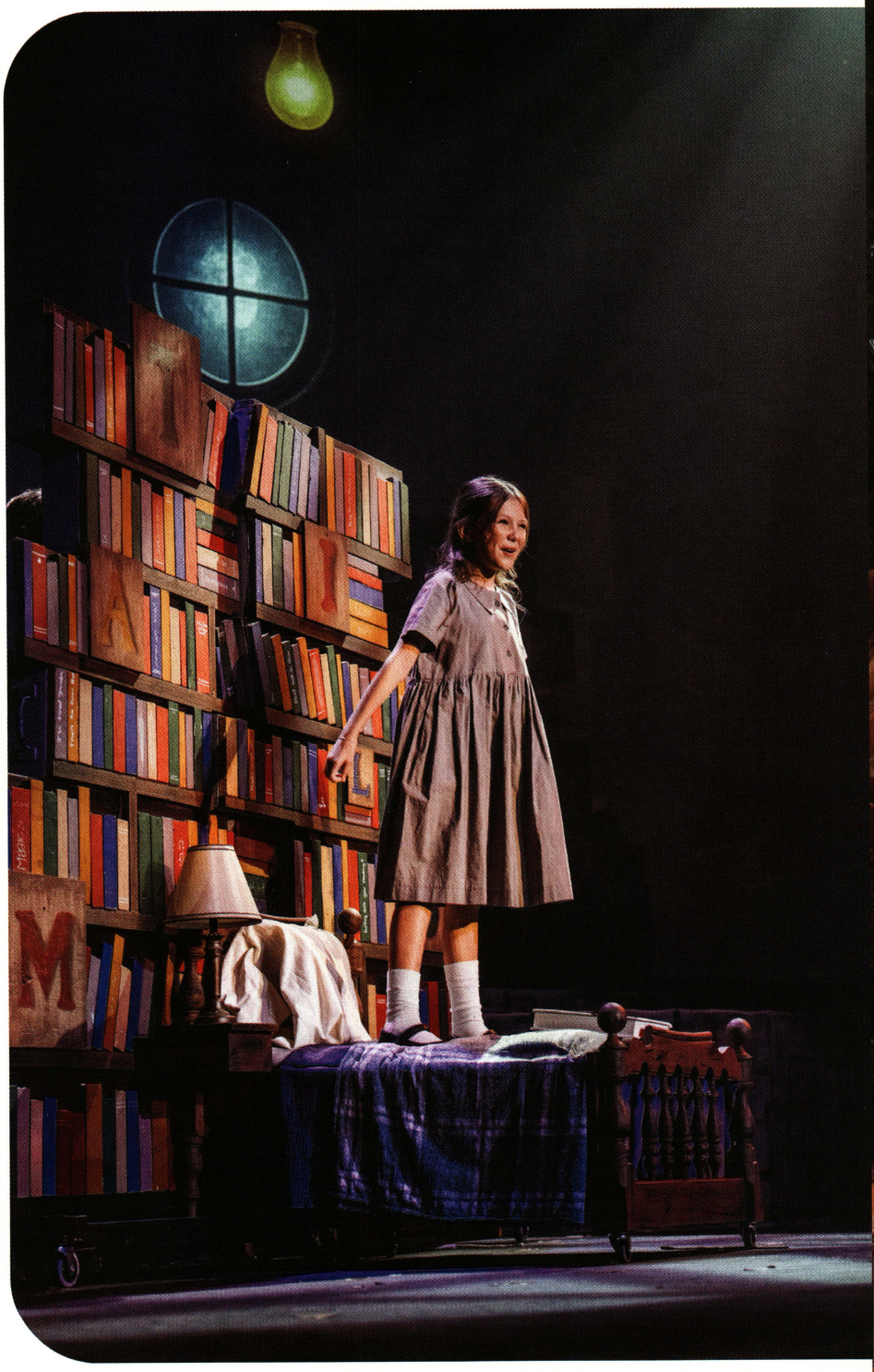
When performing a piece of music for the first or one hundredth time, I try to be emotionally involved. I think it's important to be really into whatever I'm playing in order to keep the audience's attention for the duration of the performance.

CONTINUED >

Artist Profile - Kassie Carroll Downey

EVERY ARTIST HAS A UNIQUE 'ORIGIN STORY' WITH OUR COMMUNITY. HOW HAS LIVING OR WORKING IN THE OKC AREA SHAPED YOUR CREATIVE VOICE, AND IS THERE A SPECIFIC LOCAL SPOT THAT NEVER FAILS TO INSPIRE YOU?

There are two local theaters who have greatly impacted my life as an artist over the years, Cimarron Opera and Sooner Theatre. The very first auditioned show I performed in was at Cimarron Opera when I was in 4th grade. It sparked my love for performing and ignited a passion that has been burning ever since. Cimarron Opera later in life gave me the opportunity to direct my first show professionally. Which, at the time, felt like a huge gift as I was a younger director and hadn't been able to fully hone my skills yet. Sooner Theatre was where I performed in my first musical when I was in middle school which sparked my love for musical theater. Musical Theater is what I ended up getting a bachelors degree in. While I was getting my performance degree at The University of Central Oklahoma Sooner Theatre was the first theater to hire me as a teaching artist where I led camps, taught classes and directed children's theater. These two places have significantly shaped my life over the years more than once. They both have continuously taken chances on me and oftentimes believed in me before I even believed in myself. I owe my life and career to these places and honestly don't know who or where I'd be without them.



"Every project is different for me. It seems my rituals change depending on the type of project and the role I'm playing, be it performer, director or choreographer."

WHETHER YOU ARE TUNING AN INSTRUMENT, PREPPING A CANVAS, OR REHEARSING A SCENE, WHAT DOES THE FIRST HOUR OF YOUR CREATIVE PROCESS LOOK LIKE? DO YOU HAVE ANY 'MUST-HAVE' RITUALS TO GET INTO THE ZONE?

Every project is different for me. It seems my rituals change depending on the type of project and the role I'm playing, be it performer, director or choreographer. I think the one thing that does stay the same though is my preparedness. Theater is such a collaborative process. I want to make sure I'm doing my part to bring my best self to the table every time.

FEBRUARY OFTEN SITS AT THE CROSSROADS OF WINTER'S QUIET AND THE FIRST HINTS OF SPRING. HOW DOES THIS TIME OF YEAR—OR THE THEMES OF REFLECTION AND RENEWAL—SHOW UP IN YOUR CURRENT WORK?

Fall and winter tend to be my busiest seasons. I do work on shows in February thru May but my plate seems less full during that time which allows me to truly step back and appreciate the life I get to live. Art is so life changing to so many. When I am busy it's sometimes hard to truly understand/realize the impact the art I'm doing is making on others. So, I'm grateful for the slower seasons. They allow me to sit in gratitude more and realize all of the blessings I continue to have on a daily basis.

ART IS OFTEN A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE CREATOR AND THE AUDIENCE. WHAT IS ONE THING YOU HOPE A LOCAL NEIGHBOR FEELS OR THINKS ABOUT AFTER EXPERIENCING YOUR WORK FOR THE FIRST TIME?

I hope they feel the joy of every artist on and off stage. Life is so short and we as artists are insanely lucky to get to do what we do. Joy is something I try to build into every aspect of the process both on and off stage.

CONTINUED >

Artist Profile - James Bond

EVERY ARTIST HAS A UNIQUE 'ORIGIN STORY' WITH OUR COMMUNITY. HOW HAS LIVING OR WORKING IN THE OKC AREA SHAPED YOUR CREATIVE VOICE, AND IS THERE A SPECIFIC LOCAL SPOT THAT NEVER FAILS TO INSPIRE YOU?

I love living in Oklahoma. I love the people here, and I love the space. Between Main Street Norman, Scissortail Park, and my family's land, there are plenty of places that inspire me here. All those places involve Oklahomans connecting with each other and the beautiful land where they live. I lived in Washington DC for a while and started to appreciate the place I grew up more. I learned to notice how things happen slowly here. Conversations stretch until you're late to something else, people smile on the street, and sometimes there's no express purpose other than to just connect. It's nice. It's inspiring.

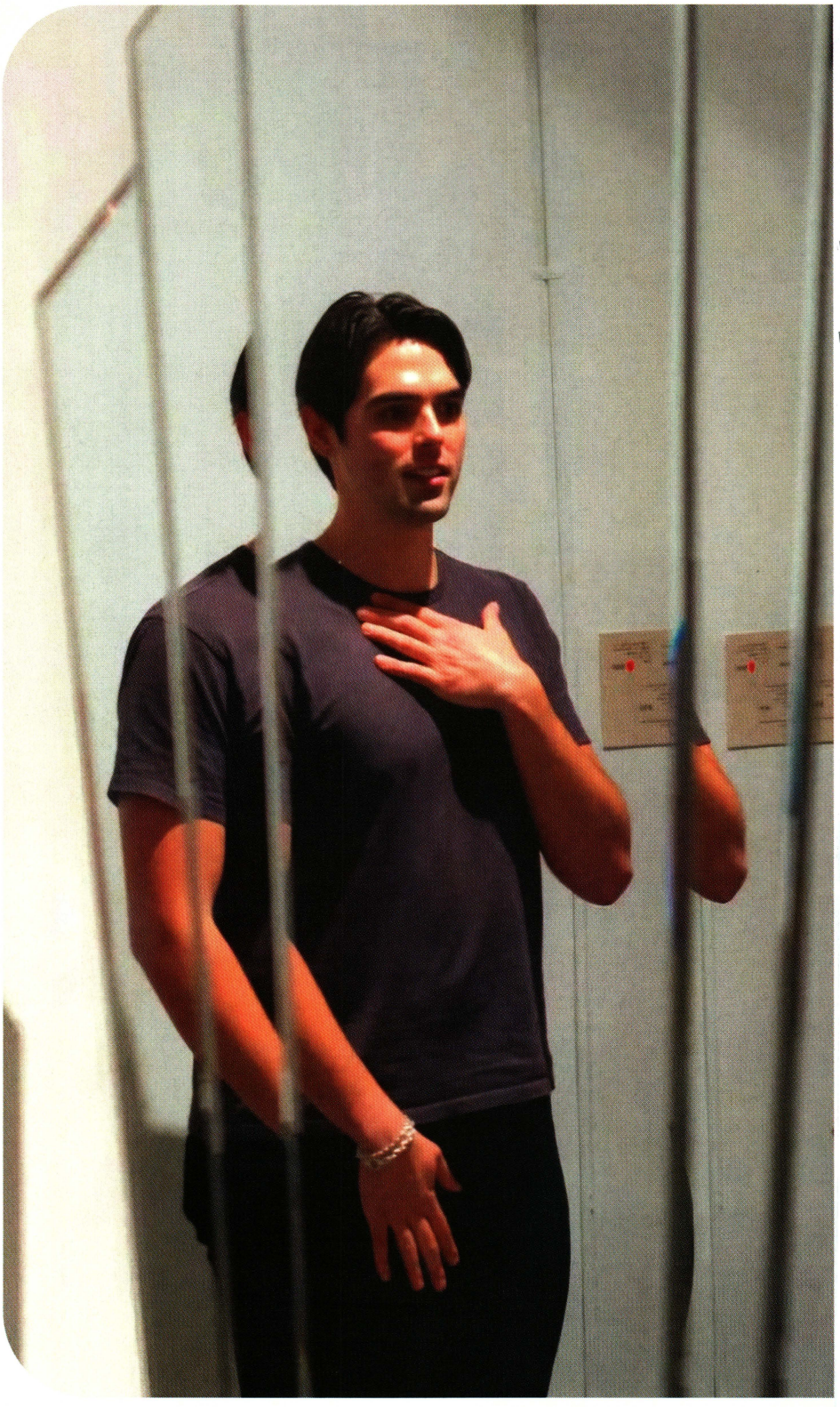
I've also found that people in Oklahoma tend to reveal themselves over time rather than all at once. There's a straightforwardness to daily life that I really enjoy, but it sits alongside complexity in the history, the people, and the land itself. That combination between surface simplicity and inner complexity fuels my work. I'm drawn to moments that feel simple upon first glance but become more layered the longer you look. In my paintings, that often shows up as a restrained palette and background paired with a subject that carries depth and narrative weight.

WHETHER YOU ARE TUNING AN INSTRUMENT, PREPPING A CANVAS, OR REHEARSING A SCENE, WHAT DOES THE FIRST HOUR OF YOUR CREATIVE PROCESS LOOK LIKE? DO YOU HAVE ANY 'MUST-HAVE' RITUALS TO GET INTO THE ZONE?

The first hour is about setting the conditions that I've learned facilitate my creativity. Most importantly, I start by sitting with the narrative and overall concept, and that part takes the most time. Once that's clear, I'll put on a playlist with a rhythm I can move my brush to, mix my palette, and get to work.

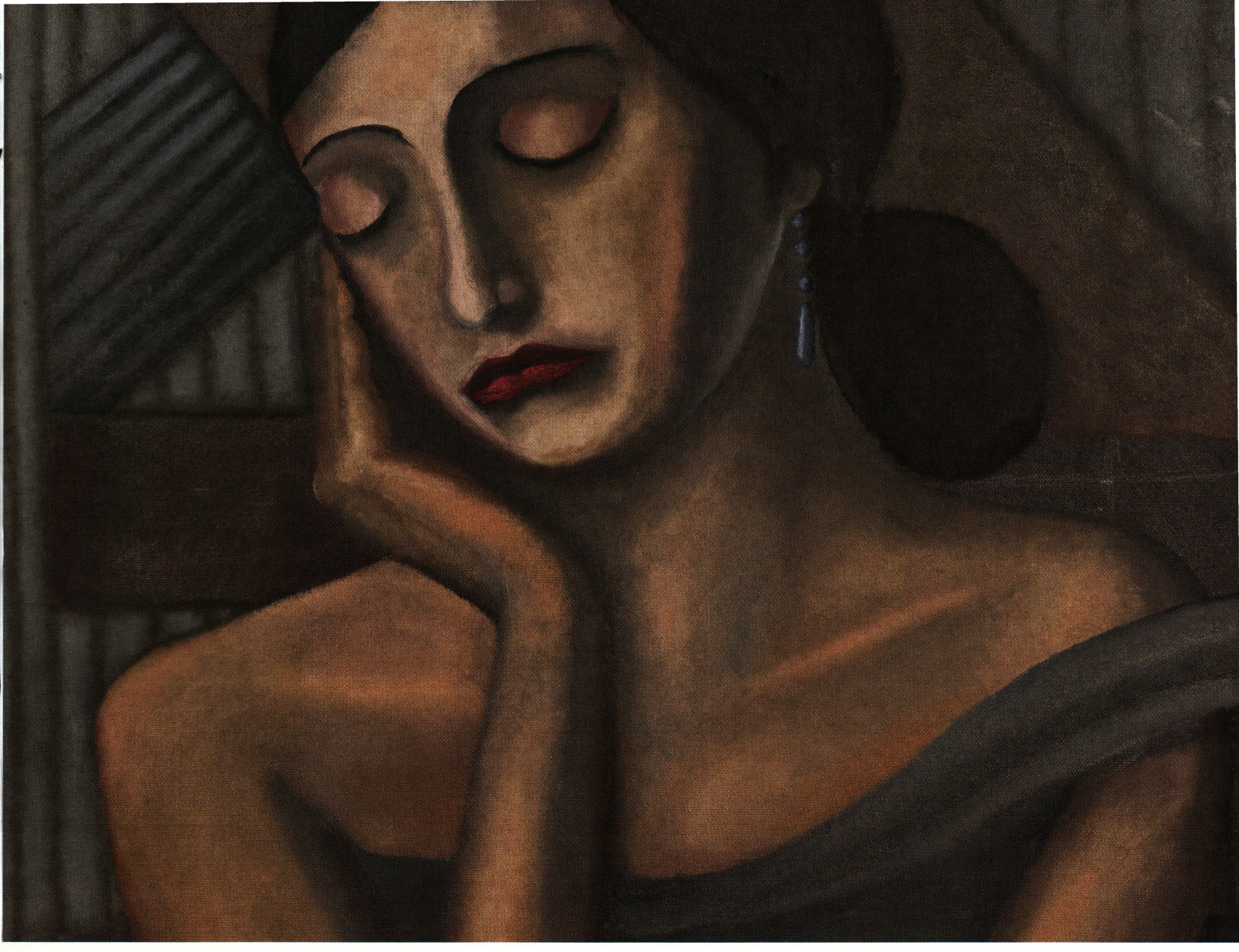
The ritual is really about signaling to myself that I'm entering a different mode that's a little more grounded in myself and a lot more patient with myself.

FEBRUARY OFTEN SITS AT THE CROSSROADS OF WINTER'S QUIET AND THE FIRST HINTS OF SPRING. HOW DOES THIS TIME



James Michael Bond

"If my work encourages curiosity or speculation once it's no longer in front of them, ***I feel like it's done its job.***"



OF YEAR—OR THE THEMES OF REFLECTION AND RENEWAL—SHOW UP IN YOUR CURRENT WORK?

January is for new ideas; February is for making sure they hold up. I see it as the stretch between intention and execution, where most of my background work happens. Editing, refining, and returning to last year's ideas before they fully take shape isn't always exciting, but creative work demands persistence. Like winter moving toward spring, a lot of root work is happening beneath the surface long before anything is visible.

ART IS OFTEN A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE CREATOR AND THE AUDIENCE. WHAT IS ONE THING YOU HOPE A LOCAL NEIGHBOR FEELS OR THINKS ABOUT AFTER EXPERIENCING YOUR WORK FOR THE FIRST TIME?

I'm less interested in people fully "understanding" the work and more interested in them feeling implicated by it. I hope they leave still thinking about it later. I like viewers of my work to feel involved in it, to speculate about what a figure was doing or thinking, otherwise participate in it, or notice new details after the fact.

If my work encourages curiosity or speculation once it's no longer in front of them, I feel like it's done its job. Art doesn't need to announce meaning. Sometimes it just needs to keep company or carry memory.

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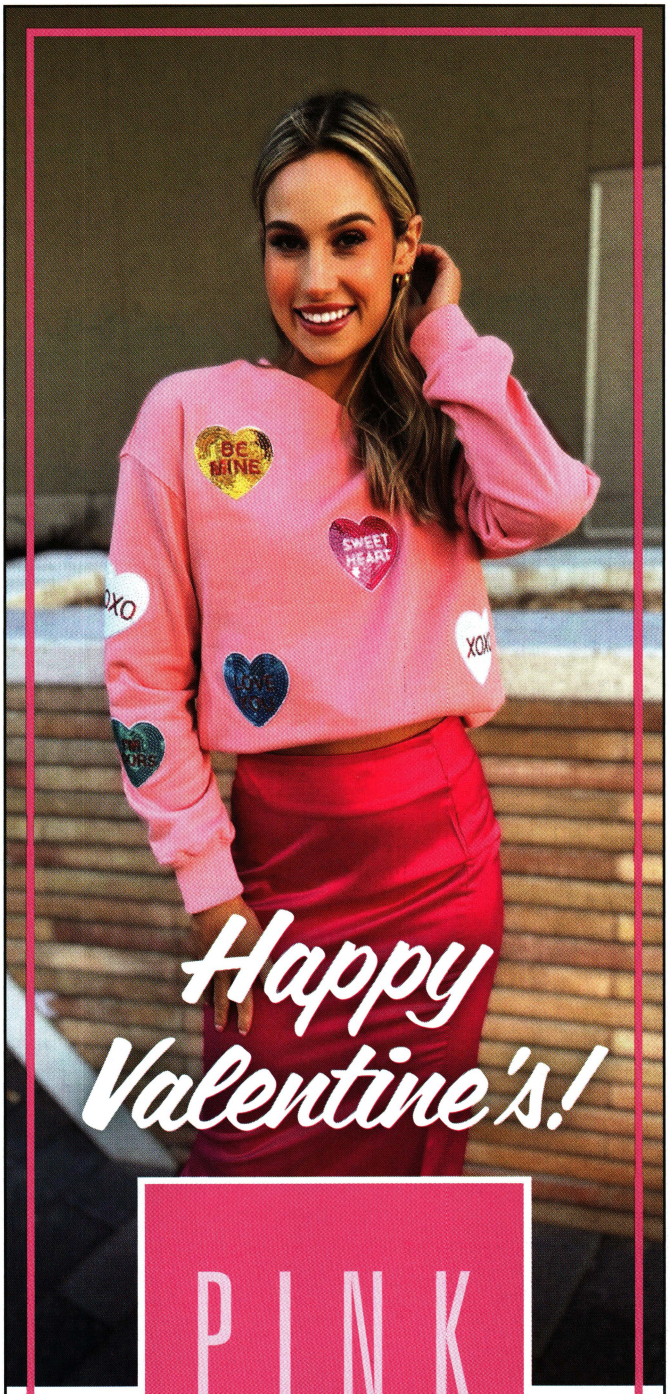
SCAN TO CONNECT



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Take in sweeping alpine views across Switzerland's Valais region.

Funicular railway at Lake Emosson.

DISCOVER THE VALAIS REGION OF SWITZERLAND, WHERE ALPINE TRAILS, THERMAL SPRINGS, AND LOCAL TRADITIONS CREATE RESTORATIVE TRAVEL.

AN ALPINE ESCAPE

In Switzerland's Valais region, wellness and adventure are always part of the same itinerary. Morning could bring a high-alpine hike, afternoon a soak in mineral-rich springs, and evening a table set with traditional cuisine, always including delicious wine and cheese. For travelers, the best part will be finding the perfect balance between exploring the outdoors and relaxing with wellness-infused activities in the heart of the Swiss Alps.

A CAR-FREE ALPINE ADVENTURE IN ALETSCH ARENA

An easy train ride from Zurich lands visitors in the Aletsch Arena, a high-alpine region on the south side of the Bernese Alps, home to three villages: Riederalp, Bettmeralp, and Fiescheralp. Known for its ski slopes in winter and hiking in summer, the area is entirely car-free, making walking and local buses the main modes of transportation through its quaint chalet-lined streets.

One of the main attractions of the ski-in/ski-out area is the Aletsch Glacier, the longest glacier in the Alps. A UNESCO World Heritage Site, the 12-mile glacier is visible from several vantage points, shaping every experience in the area.

WHERE TO STAY

Located in the heart of Bettmeralp, Hotel Panorama provides no-fuss accommodations steps away from the picturesque Chapel Maria Zum Schnee. The hotel's restaurant offers delicious regional cuisine, including raclette paired with Swiss wine. A good bottle of Pinot Noir or Gamay is also easy to come by because the Valais region of Switzerland is one of the largest wine-producing areas in the country, with vineyards dotting the steep slopes of the Rhône Valley. In addition to wine and cheese, eating cholera, a covered vegetable pie invented in the region during the cholera epidemic, is a must.

ARTICLE BY GABI DE LA ROSA

WHAT TO DO

Begin at Viewpoint Moosfluh, the closest and lowest vantage point of the Aletsch Glacier. From there, trailheads lead to Villa Cassel, once the home of a British financier and now a museum focused on history and conservation. The hike passes through a thousand-year-old forest with views of both the glacier and the Matterhorn.

Walk over Goms Bridge, a nearly 1,000-foot-long suspension bridge that connects two hiking areas over the Rhône River. For a final look at the majestic glacier, take the cable car to Viewpoint Eggishorn. At nearly 10,000 feet above sea level, it offers panoramic views of the Matterhorn, Mont Blanc, Jungfraujoch, or the "Top of Europe," and the most comprehensive view of the Aletsch Glacier.

HISTORY AND ALPS MEET IN MARTIGNY

A short train ride takes visitors to one of the largest cities in the Valais region of Switzerland. The city is a crossroads between Italy and France, with a history dating back to Roman times. Visitors can tour Roman ruins, including a well-preserved amphitheater, ancient settlements, and Roman baths.

WHERE TO STAY

Martigny Boutique Hotel is minutes from the train station and is one of the few establishments in the city employing people with disabilities. The light and bright hotel provides a comfortable base for exploring the city.

WHAT TO DO

Take the steepest funicular in the world, the Mont-Blanc Express, on a scenic ascent through the Alps. The funicular connects to a smaller train that leads to the Trient Valley on the French-Swiss border, where, at the top, a full day of activity begins. Hiking, biking, zip-lining, or traversing the Emosson Dam, which straddles France and Switzerland, are all options. The crystal clear blue waters of Emosson Lake are perfect for a picnic or a break between adventures.

Back in Martigny, Barryland, the only theme park in the world dedicated to St. Bernard dogs, offers a look at the history of the dog, bred by monks in the 17th century for alpine rescue work. The Barry Foundation, founded in 2005, continues to preserve the breed and educate visitors about it. Guests can watch the dogs train, play, and interact as they learn about their role in the region.

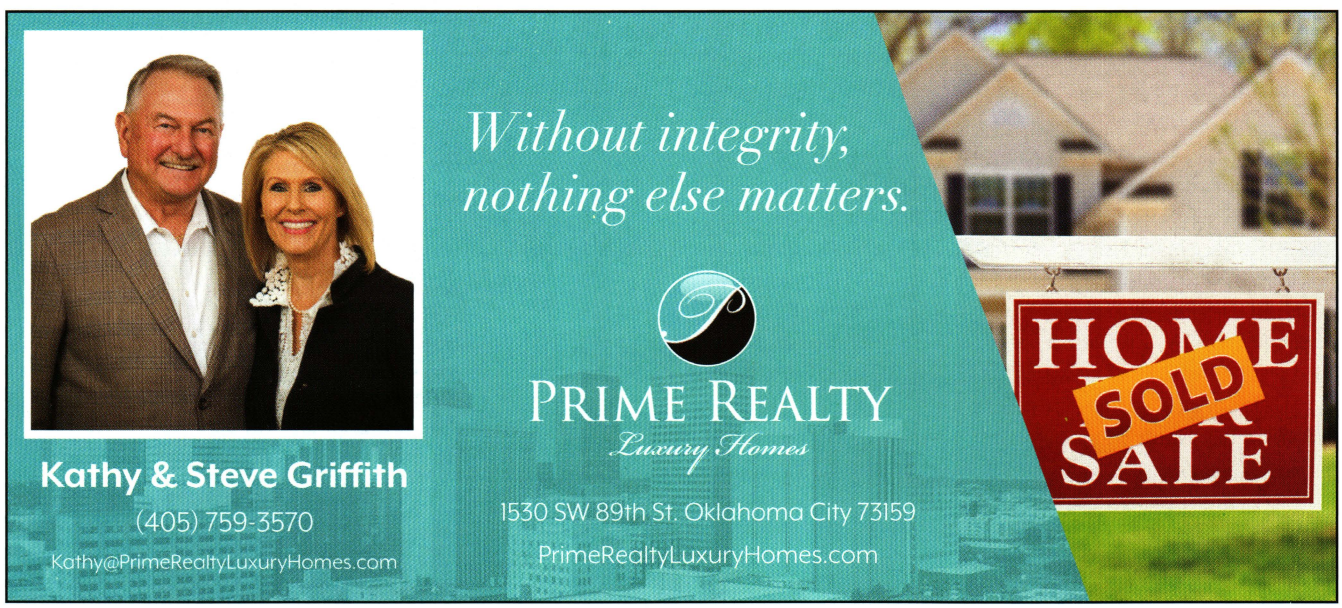
Roman influence remains visible across the city, including at Les Bains Publics at Hotel Borsari, where visitors can soak in cement wine barrels located in the hotel's spa. The baths sit on the site of a former wine tank factory and offer a circuit of hot and cold pools in a historically inspired, wine-colored setting.

realty *report*

A SAMPLE OF RECENTLY SOLD PROPERTIES IN CLEVELAND COUNTY.

NEIGHBORHOOD	ORIGINAL PRICE	SOLD PRICE	%SOLD/ORIG	DOM	BDRMS	BATHS
Brookhaven 30, Norman	1,350,000	1,000,000	74%	116	5	4.2
Rivendell, SW OKC	808,900	800,000	99%	346	4	3.1
Rio de Bella 2, SW OKC	786,000	760,000	97%	102	4	3.1
Church Hill Estates, Moore	775,000	709,000	91%	122	4	3.1
Pine Creek, Norman	776,110	683,888	88%	433	3	2.1
Sendera Lakes 4, Moore	650,000	650,000	100%	46	4	3
Cascata Lakes 2, SW OKC	549,900	545,000	99%	1	4	3.1
Rolling Hills 2, Norman	550,000	531,000	97%	57	6	4.2
Willows, Moore	479,900	466,000	97%	36	4	2.1
Apple Estates, Moore	485,000	459,000	95%	80	4	2.1
Native Planes, SW OKC	457,820	437,820	96%	0	3	2.1
Cinnamon Run, Norman	350,000	342,500	98%	13	3	2
Santa Fe Sunset 6, SW OKC	349,900	341,000	97%	2	3	2
Sweetwater, SE OKC	229,900	229,900	100%	31	3	2
South Glenn 1, Moore	220,000	221,750	100%	2	3	2
East Ridge II, Norman	225,000	219,900	98%	86	3	2
Southridge, SW OKC	215,000	205,000	95%	35	3	2
Apple Village 3, Moore	210,000	205,000	98%	0	3	2
Colonial Estates XV, Norman	200,000	202,000	100%	71	3	2

This data is a sampling of sold properties from last month. Source: OKC/Norman Multiple Listing System.



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ARTICLE AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY AMY SALVAGNO

Elevated Cocktails for Brunch & Beyond

3 Fun Cocktails That Are Sure To Impress

Whether you prefer to dine reclining pillow-side in pajamas or beside a beautifully dressed table, you'll appreciate an elegant, elevated cocktail to make your brunch menu extra special. So while you're indulging in a few extra pieces of bacon, savoring bites of flaky quiche and luxuriating over berry and whipped cream-topped pancakes, you'll be sure to impress with one of these three morning-friendly mixes.

Gin & Jam

A simple ingredient drink unites the botanical complexity of gin with the rich sweetness of your favorite jam.

Ingredients:

- 2 ounces gin
- 1 ounce lemon juice
- 1/2 ounce simple syrup
- 1 teaspoon raspberry (or your favorite) jam
- Spoonful of jam for garnish

Instructions:

1. Add the gin, lemon juice, simple syrup, and jam to your mixing glass.

2. Add ice and shake for 10 seconds.

3. Strain into a double old-fashioned glass over crushed ice.

4. Top with a spoonful of jam and stir it in while you sip.

CONTINUED >

Margarita *Mimosas*

Sweet and tart combined with classic champagne bubbles make for the perfect brunch accompaniment.

Ingredients:

- 2 cups orange juice
- 1/2 cup tequila
- 1/4 cup lime juice
- Lime wedge, for rimming glasses
- Coarse salt, for rimming glasses
- 1 bottle champagne or Prosecco
- Orange and lime slices for serving

Instructions:

1. In a pitcher, combine orange juice, tequila and lime juice and stir to combine.

2. Line glass rims with lime and dip in salt. Pour in orange juice mixture and top off with champagne.

3. Add sliced oranges and limes to glasses and serve.

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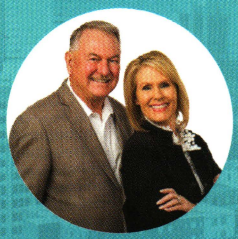

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